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Investigating the Perception of Identity Shift in Trilingual Speakers: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

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This is a case study that examines the perception of identity shift in trilingual speakers. The participants were three females from Moldova, a country in Eastern Europe, that have moved to the U.S. Participants responded to open-ended questions during an individual interview and self-report. The questions were about (1) the way they think in their native language, (2) the way they feel in different situations while switching languages, and (3) their interactions with others, depending on their relationships with the participants, the situation, and the language they use at that moment. Primary findings suggest that trilingual speakers perceive a shift in their identity depending on the language they are speaking.

The languages used for this case study are Romanian, Moldovan-Romanian, Russian, and English. These are the languages spoken by a people who have been in social, cultural, and political conflict for centuries, most recently throughout the Soviet Union era, and even up to recent post-Soviet conflicts. Studying the perception of identity shift in multilingual speakers allows linguists to understand fluidity in identity in additional language-acquisition contexts. Such findings may help in second-language acquisition research, language teaching, immigration-assimilation research or resistance-to-assimilation research. The results of this study support previous findings of people switching their personality according to the language used at that moment. In this case, *personality* is similar to *identity*.

Keywords: Romanian, Moldovan-Romanian, Russian, Soviet Union, perception of identity shift, language identity, multilingual, personality, second-language acquisition, immigration assimilation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There are people in large cities all over the world who speak numerous languages and do not struggle to switch between them. The United States is a great example of a place with numerous ethnic groups living side by side. Immigrants to the U.S. are compelled to learn English to get by and to adjust to a new culture. Most of them do not realize that when switching to a new a language, they might also be switching their identity. Personal accent identifies each person as a unique individual. However, it is not only the accent that tells the story of who each person is: language use intimately connects with personal identity. "To understand the vibrant and increasing interest in identity and second language acquisition, it is important to understand conceptions of the individual, language, and learning in the field" (Norton, 2012, p. 1).

Norton (1997) uses the term *identity* to refer "to how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (p. 410). In this sense, identity is one of the factors determines how an individual adopts a second language. The question, then, is whether or not someone's identity changes when switching languages, and whether that person perceives this change, specifically in the way the person thinks (cognition), the way the person feels (affect), and the way the person interacts with others (social behavior).

In this thesis, sociolinguistic tools were used to find data and determine if there was any correlation between the languages that people use and what causes them to feel unique, especially when it comes to identity.

An excellent example of this is an exceptional book entitled *Hunger of Memory*. It is an autobiography by Richard Rodriguez, who discusses discoveries regarding education in the U.S. based on his experiences coming from a Mexican-American immigrant family. This book has

similarities to this case study. Even though the book explores experiences of a Mexican-American immigrant family, it relates to the sociolinguistic identity-language concept for these case study participants, who are originally from Moldova, an Eastern European country. In this research, there will be some facts about the Romanian-Moldovan relationship, and about the Moldovan relationship with Russia. It is not easy to describe the reality surrounding these relationships, but inside each Moldovan citizen there is the "*hunger for memory*" that Richard Rodriguez describes. This research will bring more clarity to this topic. It will discuss the relationship of languages and will give examples of how languages influence people and affect their identity when they use different languages day to day.

The author's motivation for this study has come from extensive research and numerous personal experiences as a Moldovan speaker growing up in a multilingual context. In Moldova, the acquisition of Russian was forced in an attempt to make it the primary language, and Romanian was changed into a different language—Moldovan. Acquiring these other languages, like French, Spanish, and Russian in high school and then college, caused a lot of changes to the author's identity, and now living in the U.S. has definitely been an interesting time to make some observations about the perception of identity shift, to see differences in identity shift and how much it influences daily life.

According to Joseph (2004), "there are multiple identities when it comes to an individual's life... . The first is the universal fact that individuals have various roles concerning others—child, friend, spouse, parent, teacher, colleague and so on." In these terms, our identity shifts according to who we are with (p. 8).

The Moldovan identity is influenced by the fact that many people from Moldova speak Romanian with a slightly different dialect that comes from knowing Russian, but when

Moldovan people speak Russian, they sometimes are identified as Russian. Physical appearance also makes a difference in ethnicity. People with Slavic facial features and a Russian accent are often identified as Russians. Gestures, facial expressions, or intonation also indicate ethnic identity.

There will be a quick overview of some studies that involve Russian and Romanian languages in the bilingual and multilingual context, with some relation to identity as well. Buja (2008) explores the attitudes of Moldovan-Russian bilinguals toward Romanian and the formerly dominant language, Russian, "as well as the position of the two groups of monolinguals toward the afore-mentioned bilingual people" (p. 113). Rogers (2014) discusses the national identity crisis in Moldova (p. 31). Simionov (2012) brings in the most difficult question in regards to language and identity (p. 1). According to Simionov, "the Romanian/Moldovan language had a dual function, whether the Moldovan people interacted with Russians or whether they interacted with Romanians."

Language is a part of our daily life; thus, daily life influences language. Likewise, culture influences language use. Language and culture are strongly related to language identity. It cannot be denied that without learning the culture a person cannot master the language. Therefore, this paper will attempt to identify some differences in the cultures of the participants and how they had to adapt.

The study focused particularly on Moldovan participants that are trilingual speakers. This ethnic focus was warranted because of the language and cultural background of participants, being from Moldova, a country from where "the language lead to identity crisis instead of establishing one" (Simionov, 2012, p. 1). The area of interest was primarily the perception of identity shift of participants as they switch languages day to day. There are a few hypotheses

about how people perceive their identity interacting in languages they use day to day. To prove them, a case study would be most useful.

The data were analyzed with the intention of identifying factors that influence trilingual speakers to change their identity. After observations and self-evaluations, this thesis addressed the following research questions:

1. Do people perceive that they think differently when using their second and third languages? If so, what are the differences?
2. Do people perceive that they have a different set of affects and attitudes when using their second and third languages? If so, what are the differences?
3. Do people perceive that they act differently when using their second and third languages. If so, what are the differences?

This study will include a review of relevant literature in order to establish greater understanding on the topic discussed. It will then present an outline of the methodology and description of the instruments used to collect the data, followed by a description of the findings. Finally, it will conclude with a discussion of the results, limitations, and implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This section will first review the key terms used in this study. Next, it will present a linguistics background of trilingualism. Finally, it will review previous research that studied the perception of identity shift in bilingual and trilingual speakers, including studies about language identity in Moldova.

The terms most relevant to this study are the following: *attitude, affect, behavior, code-switching, self-report, language identity, second language acquisition, trilingualism, and identity shift.*

This research will explore the question of whether or not someone can perceive their identity change when switching languages, specifically in the way a person thinks (cognition), the way a person feels (affect), and the way a person interacts with others (social behavior). Norton (1997) uses the term *identity* to refer to "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (p. 410). Language identity is further refined in a social environment in which speakers are challenged daily to speak up and share opinions. This identity shifting occurs daily according to the speaker's language abilities and the different environments in which the speaker lives. According to Norton (1997), people who have access to a wide range of resources in society will have access to power in privilege, which will in turn influence how they understand their relationship to the world and their possibilities for the future (p. 410). Therefore, knowing more than one language expands these opportunities and gives a more secure future for a person. In Norton's view (1997), a person's identity will shift depending on the changing social and economic relationships in people's lives. The more people interact in different environments, the higher the chance that identity will change (p. 410).

A great example would be Richard Rodriguez's autobiography. As he would say, "Once upon a time, I was a 'socially disadvantaged' child" (p. 1). As Richard Rodriguez said, it can be quite challenging. "Consider me, if you choose, a comic victim of two cultures" (Rodriguez, 2005, p. 4).

An individual can be one type of person as a child and an entirely different type of person as he or she grows up. The same identity change happens when someone is challenged to learn and use other languages in accordance with various social environments. The participants in this case study have been subjected to *three* different cultures. A description of their cultural background will follow in the methodology as we analyze the data from the interviews. Each linguistic factor determines how a speaker's identity is influenced. Thus, the participants were questioned about things such as their daily environment. Such factors become a realm of opportunity to analyze and examine the differences.

Attitude, Affect, and Social Behavior

Numerous studies have established that such variables as attitude, affect, motivation, and social behavior are crucial in second-language learning and communication. There are also a number of psycho-sociolinguistic factors that help to explain how people acquire or learn languages (Henn-Reinke, 2012, p. 3). In this case study, the focus is on one of these factors: the perception of identity. This focus on identity will help us better understand how individuals maintain their first and second languages and then become fluent in their third. This study specifically focuses on how people perceive their identity as being shifted when people switch languages that they know at a high proficiency level.

"If families have moved from one language setting to another, they may have also experienced a change in status", which influences their identity when they embrace a new

community (Henn-Reinke, 2012, p. 7). Depending on how people are welcomed to a new place, immigrants tend to have either negative or positive attitudes, which "makes them 'visible' within the school [or other environments] or excludes, marginalizes, and ultimately silences them" (Henn-Reinke, 2012, p. 7).

Code-switching

Code-switching is defined differently by a variety of writers. Some claim *code-switching* to be "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (Pittman, 2008, p. 125). Others like "to use the term of 'code-switching' to refer to switching from one language to another between sentences and 'code-mixing' for switches occurring within the same sentence or clause" (Pittman, 2008, p. 125). In this research, the term *code-language* is used, which defines using different lexicon from two different languages in one sentence. For our study, the "*code-switching*" is meant to help finding differences in identity shift. For example, the participants in this research did that during the interviews.

Self-report

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, the definition of *self-report* is the following: a report about one's behavior provided especially by one who is a subject of research. One of the most common methods of personality assessment is self-report (Paulhus and Vazire, 2009, p. 224). The advantages of having self-reports include easy interpretability, richness of information, motivation to report, casual force, and sheer practicality (Paulhus and Vazire, 2009, p. 227).

However, the self-report method has been a frequent target of criticism from the early days of psychological assessment. Sociolinguistic studies often show that there is a disparity between self-reported data and the ratings made by qualified observers (Kannapel, p. 105).

There are different types of self-report to use in order to get the analysis needed for the current project. This research project used the direct self-rating type of method, in which "people are asked to report directly on their own personalities" (Paulhus and Vazire, 2009, p. 225). In this case *personality* is changed to *identity*, and in the interviews, the questions were formed according to *identity shift differences* rather than personality. Another method was open-ended self-descriptions, which "allows respondents to use any constructs they wish in describing themselves" (Paulhus and Vazire, 2009, p. 225). This method was the most effective in collecting the data needed: the participants felt free to share anything they thought was appropriate and relevant to the subject. The answers provide a decent amount of information about identity, thus although the answers may be quite different from participant to participant, this still remains the best method to get information about how they perceive their identity (Paulhus and Vazire, 2009, p. 225).

There might be some disadvantages in using self-report methods, according to "The Self-Report Method" (Paulhus and Vazire, 2009, p. 224): "an overreaching issue is the credibility of self-reports." Even when participants do their best to share stories and other examples that describes them best, self-reporting can lead to various sources of inaccuracy, and the limitations such as self-deception and memory can also give inaccurate results. When it comes to face-to-face interviews, there are other issues as well, such as "effects of self-consciousness, rapport, transference, and modeling" (Paulhus and Vazire, 2009, p. 225). In order to avoid misinterpretation and misconception, the questions that were asked at the interview were asked twice, or a question was asked that was similar to a previous one in order to check the data and confirm the answer of the respondent. People tend to tell stories differently each time, and

sometimes they also like to add things to make it seem more interesting. That is why the focus was only on the information they shared and not how they shared it.

Language and Identity

Identity plays a major role in sociolinguistics. It is one of the factors that helps to determine how an individual adopts a second language. Some studies about identity and languages have proven to be different and similar at the same time. According to Norton (1997), some authors framed *identity* in different terms. These terms are gathered from a wide range of articles, such as "social identity", "sociocultural identity", "voice", "cultural identity", and "ethnic identity" (Norton, 1997, p 419). Each of these terms have been studied and analyzed in diverse ways to find the link between language and identity.

The most common or general definition of language is that language is a "means or a tool or a way of communicating" (Kannapell, 1993, p. 6). From Kannapell's point of view, when looking at a language internally, it can also be viewed as a means of thinking and reasoning. In linguistic terms, a language can be defined by its structure, morphology, syntax, phonology, and semantics. A definition of language then becomes quite complex, but even more so when someone speaks three languages and claims to be fluent in all three. Language is more than a system of signs, according to Norton; it is a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities are negotiated (Norton, 2012, p. 3).

What is the speaker's identity when it comes to language? It can be said that each individual at birth has no choice in the language he or she must learn. A child learns his or her mother tongue—literally, the language his or her mother speaks.

In terms of a second language, sometimes people get to choose what to learn. However, in this case study, none of the participants had the choice of their second language. Therefore,

the second identity of each one of the participants was decided for them. For some individuals, knowing the second language as well as their native tongue can be a curse or a blessing. This opinion is derived from many factors, the political factor being among them.

A language is an identity marker in an individual's life. It becomes the central point of an ethnic group and helps them to be identified as a nation. Unfortunately, in Moldova "the language has led to an identity crisis instead of the establishment of one" (Simionov, 2005, p. 1).

Identity in Second-Language Acquisition

"The individual is conceived of as a 'subject,' in that the individual can be subject *to* a set of relationships in one social site, or subject *of* a set of relationships in another social site" (Norton, 2012, p. 2). The importance that a language has for a certain community or people can be crucial. Language can bring people together, but it can also tear them apart. Rodriguez described it best when he explained how he became obsessed with the way his language determined his public identity. According to Norton (2012), every time language learners interact in their second language, whether in oral or written form, they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation (p. 2). There are things that impact people in their language-learning processes daily. These things may be a set of relationships (such as friendship, marriage, brotherhood, etc.) that are socially empowered to help them communicate with others. Such characteristics as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation may indicate possible directions in our identity research, but they do not ultimately determine it.

To understand the vibrant and increasing interest in identity and second-language acquisition, it is important to understand the conceptions of the individual, of language, and of learning in the field (Norton, 2012, p. 1). The relationships that are set for the speakers, or that the speakers tend to find on their own, will increase the chance of the identity being shifted.

Most people like to be proud of where they come from. Moldovan people tend to be proud of their country, and despite the language wars, the people do not identify themselves as a minor group but as a unique group.

Each of the participants shared their feelings toward their own native language and how proud they were to know another language, despite the fact that it was forced on them. According to Simionov (2005), "the two phases of the recent history of Moldova marked two stages of Moldovan identity: The Soviet Era contributed to the establishment and strengthening of a Moldovan identity while the period of independence that followed emphasized an identity crisis due to the close contact that Moldova re-initiated with Romania." (p. 10)

Trilingualism

Table 1 provides some indication of the differences among monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual/multilingual perspectives in relation to language and culture (Henn-Reinke, 2012, p. 3).

Table 1: Comparisons of Monolingual, Bilinguals, and Trilinguals in Language and Culture

Monolingual	**Bilingual**	**Trilingual/Multilingual**
-	Language learning competence: -linguistic resources to draw upon; -understanding of how languages work;	Language learning competence: -greater resources to draw upon; -greater understanding of how languages work;
-	Cognitive flexibility in language learning: -dual language	Cognitive flexibility in language learning: -calling on knowledge of 3 languages
Monocultural	Cultural flexibility: -dual contexts	Cultural flexibility: -multiple contexts

-	Greater risk-taking in language learning: -using languages for multiple purposes.	Greater risk-taking in language learning: -using languages for multiple purposes.
Literacy skills in one language	Possible literacy skills in two languages	Possible literacy skills in three languages or more languages
Proficient in one language	Varying levels of proficiency in two languages	Varying levels of proficiency in three or more languages
Parents speak same language as school	Parent communication with school may be complex: -use of two languages; -varying ability to communicate with L1 speakers of school; -differences in school experiences/expectations.	Parent communication with school may be more complex: -use of several languages; -varying ability to communicate with L1 speakers of school; -differences in school experiences/expectations
Draw from one language to facilitate communication	Draw from two languages to facilitate communication	Draw from three or more languages to facilitate communication

To understand how people perceive their identity shifting as they switch languages, there is a need of a deeper understanding of trilingualism. However, trilingualism (or multilingualism) is quite complex to describe. It involves a new grammar or a new vocabulary set, but it is also intricately linked to identity, status, and usage (Henn-Reinke, 2012, p. 3). That is why we need to understand that trilingualism involves not only linguistic competence in three languages but also the ability to understand and function in a trilingual context (Henn-Reinke, 2012, p. 3). People that are able to think, to judge, and to comprehend in all three languages become self-aware that they can do a lot more than other people. It is hard to keep up with all three languages, but if someone is determined, he or she can achieve an impressive degree of competency in each.

When the cultural aspect comes into perspective, most trilinguals understand that their identity tends to shift.

All of the participants in the case study acquired their second language growing up in an environment that was set for them. Thirty years ago, at the approximate time of each of their births, Russian was very commonly known in Moldova. In schools and other public institutions, Russian was always a foreign language; it was never the official language. However, everywhere people would go, they had to know Russian: 40% of population was Russian, and 13% were from other nations that used Russian as the intermediate language of understanding (AWL).

There are obvious differences between the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of being bilingual or multilingual. Although there are many similarities, the linguistic and cultural life of a trilingual person is far more complex than that of a bilingual person (Henn-Reinke, 2012, p. 3).

Identity Shift

The goal is to look for a slight change in people's identity when they switch languages that are about the same level of proficiency. Sometimes this *slight change* can be mistaken for personality instead of identity. In this case study, the focus is to look only for the perception of identity shift when it comes to language.

According to McWhorter (2014), there is a reason why people feel different when they speak a different language (p. 163). This uncomfortable sensation occurs when the speaker does not speak the second language fluently enough. And as McWhorter (2014) states, if the speakers were asked why they felt different, the usual answer was that they aren't as witty as or are blunter than they would be when they are speaking in their native language (p. 163).

Here's an example from Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation* (1989): "My mother says I'm becoming 'English.' This hurts me, because I know she means I'm becoming cold. I'm no colder

than I have ever been, but I'm learning to be less demonstrative" (p. 146). People do not necessarily change their personality all of a sudden when speaking Russian, for example, and then when switching to Romanian, even though they act differently. A great example would be Ilan Stavans, the Mexican-American author of Jewish origin, in *On Borrowed Words*. *A Memoir of Language* (2001): "Changing languages is like imposing another role on oneself, like being someone else temporarily. My English-language persona is the one that superimposes itself on all previous others. In it are the seeds of Yiddish and Hebrew, but mostly Spanish… But is the person really the same? …You, know sometimes I have the feeling I'm not one but two, three, four people. Is there an original person? An essence? I'm not altogether sure, for without language I am nobody" (p. 251).

Dewaele's study created a set of questions to help to determine more than just how different people feel when switching languages. In his study, he identifies multilingual "chameleons" (Dewaele, 2015). It is an interesting descriptor, but quite appropriate, for chameleons are able to change their color according to their environment. Does that mean that people are able to change their identity based on their linguistic environment? Here are some of Dewaele's questions as an example of what he had in mind by saying "chameleons": "Could bi- and multilinguals, like chameleons, shift instantaneously between their selves according to linguistic and cultural context?"; "Is it possible that the sense of shift fades as some 'intermediate' behavior sets in?"; "Could that individual inhabit some third space? (cf. Kramsch, 2009)", (Dewaele, 2015). According to Dewaele's results (2015), "people do not always know when the change happens, these feelings can be dynamic in nature, and sometimes they can feel different because of the age difference, education levels and foreign language anxiety".

These results are logical. Everyone is different, and acts differently, according to situations and environments they are in. That is why the interviews with the participants are more of a self-report than actual findings. This case study could be a step forward to a more detailed case study to be done in order to find specific findings on identity shift in trilingual or multilingual speakers.

The one assumption in relation to Dewaele's study would be that an identity shift can be seen only if the person himself makes a daily report on his or her behavior, feelings, and thoughts. However, there are problems with that assumption. Some of the questions from the interviews are not easy to respond to on the spot. Some of the questions would have been good to ask had the participants been in a specific situation. And there are other considerations. For instance, other studies suggested that most people felt different when switching because they were not as fluent in their second or third language as they are in their native language.

Romanian-Moldovan Language Background

"The present constitution of the Republic of Moldova, adopted in 1994, asserts that the country's official language is 'Moldovan', and a recent well-publicized dictionary purports to provide evidence that Moldovan is a separate language from Romania." (PCGN, 2005, p. 1) This article states that "in reality this dictionary only confirms that the notion of Moldovan as a separate language from Romanian is a fiction" (PCGN, 2005, p. 1).

When searching on the site http://aboutworldlanguages.com, Moldovan is not listed. Instead, Romanian is listed. Contrary to what this might indicate, some people still truly believe that *Moldovan* is their mother tongue. This is not a bad thing, but it further shows how the Moldovan national identity is being changed overtime. Therefore, one of the interview questions addresses this issue.

The following paragraph is taken from the About World Languages website in order to give a brief but accurate introduction to the Romanian language and its origins:

> Romanian (Româna), is the easternmost member of the Romance branch of the Indo-European language family. Romanian is spoken as a first language by 19.7 million people. It is also the official language of Moldova, a former Soviet republic, where it is sometimes called Moldovan. Romanian vocabulary is mostly of Latin origin. It has many Slavic elements, with an estimated 40% of Romanian vocabulary consisting of borrowings from neighboring Slavic languages. Romanian is the only surviving descendant of the Balkan branch one of the Romance language family. An adapted version of the Cyrillic alphabet was used in the Soviet Republic of Moldova until 1989, when it was replaced by the Latin alphabet used in Romania. The Cyrillic alphabet was not a good fit for Romanian. However, many Moldavians, educated during the Soviet period, still use the Cyrillic alphabet (AWL about world languages).

The Moldovan language has its own history, and there is a dispute on how it was created and to what extent it might have brought "an identity crisis to its people" (Simionov, 2005, p. 1). According to Simionov, who used two different theories regarding nation building through languages, the Moldovan language was "born" in order to offer legitimacy to the newly constructed Moldovan identity (2005). Simionov states that "the identity marker that played a major role in uniting and dividing the Moldovan nation was language" (Simionov, 2005). Since the Soviet Union's collapse, that effect has not changed. People to this day suffer from the fact that their identity has been shaken. Therefore, it has not been easy to argue that Moldovan identities have truly shifted, sometimes willingly, other times not so. In this case study, the focus

will be on finding how Moldovan trilinguals perceive the differences in their identity in their different languages.

Moldovan vs. Romanian vs. Russian

Throughout the years, the human world has always been in a constant state of change. Most change happens because of politics, technological progress, war, and so on. As much as people try to maintain what they have, languages also change from time to time. For Moldova, the changeable nature of language has been a source of struggle. No one denies that most people from Moldova wished to speak a "pure" Romanian.

A case study was done on identifying the attitudes of bilingualism, using Moldovan-Russian bilinguals (Buja, 2008, p. 115). Here are some examples from that case study of differences between the Romanian language from Moldova and the Romanian language from Romania.

These two countries have Romanian as their official language, but because Moldova used to be part of the U.S.S.R, Russian was implemented in Moldova, and the Romanian language suffered drastically.

The researcher, Buja, created an online forum where anyone could comment and have discussions on the questions she had addressed. The forum displayed different opinions: positive, negative, and neutral. The forum also showed the attitudes of individuals about these three countries and what the participants feel towards each language they know.

The following statement was made by the former vice president of the Commission for Education and Science in Romania, published in the daily newspaper *Cotidianul* [1]on July 30th, 2003:

[1] *Cotidianul* was a Romanian language newspaper published in Bucharest, Romania, between 1991 and 2009.

> It is not another language, but a language that has been maimed, jeered at. It is as if the Romanian language had come out, after a number of years, of an Auschwitz of the language. A man who spent some years in Auschwitz is not like he used to be. He is like a shipwreck, he looks awful. Well, this is the deplorable situation of Romanian over there, a situation that inspires pity. (Buja, 2008, p. 115).

This example was written by a Romanian monolingual to Moldovan-Russian bilinguals. People tend to think of Romanian as one language, not two. If this is the case, participants have a positive attitude towards their L1, even if it is influenced by their L2 (Russian). To them, Romanian-Moldovan is like a "code language" that neither Romanians or Russians will be able to comprehend. The following is an example of this code language, which Buja describes in her research as more like a "puzzle":

> Once she was waiting for her boyfriend and seeing the he was not coming, she said: "offf, cre'ca s-o *prapadit* Gheorghe" ('oh, I think that Gheorghe has died'). She meant to say that he had got lost. Another time she asked me: "cand ai venit mai era *piteorca* aia afara?" ('when you came, was that piteorca still outside?'). Realizing that I did not understand, she confused me even more: "piteorca, adica *jigulie*" ('piteorca, that is jigulie'). What do you think she was talking about? A car, an old Russian-made Lada. (Buja, 2008, p. 116).

In this example, Romanian is mixed with Russian. If one knows both Russian and Romanian, then this conversation is understood.

A Moldovan's knowledge of both languages changes not only his or her vocabulary but also his or her accent. From Buja's research, there are people who wish to change their

pronunciation, their grammar, or their lexicon without getting embarrassed, as she describes from some of the examples in the research (Buja, 2008, p. 117).

The last example is about the attitude of the Moldovans towards Russians and the Russian language (Buja, 2008, p. 119). A few questions that are in this case study are related to the following example. Since Moldova was part of the Soviet Union, Russia sent a lot of Russians, Ukrainians, and other nationalities to migrate to Moldova. Those immigrants never learned Romanian, and because of that, Russian became a dominant language during that time, even though it was not even an official language. In 2000, after Moldova became an independent country, the government tried to implement Russian as a second official language, but that measure failed.

According to Buja, attitudes toward a language are often mixed with attitudes toward the users of that language (2008). The following is a statement of a girl whose first language is Russian:

> I am Moldovan, but the first language I learned was Russian. Those were the years… the Russians (and the Ukrainians) were imported here incessantly and they did not learn Romanian! I know that many who have lived here for generations and not only don't speak Romanian, but they don't even want to learn it! The people here have been discriminated against. Even nowadays it may happen that you enter a shop and hear the shop-assistant telling you in Romanian 'speak properly' (meaning 'Speak Romanian because I don't understand'). Can you imagine? To feel like a foreigner in your own country! (Buja, 2008, p. 119).

It is good to know many languages; in fact, many countries encourage citizens to learn a language other than their own. Although, it does make the citizens feel better when there is a

choice of what language to learn. The ongoing dispute between Moldovans and Russians in Moldova might not end for a while, but the fact that Moldovans do know Russian brings Moldovans some pride, especially to those who have moved away from Moldova.

The participants in this case study will describe their feelings toward Russian, Romanian, and English explicitly, and how those feelings affect them. Are they willing to improve their language fluency, or do they want to lose it? That will be an important indicator of how much of their identity is being changed as the participants have immigrated to the U.S., and how much Russian they still use day to day.

In other studies, there are compelling arguments. For example, Lambert states that "becoming a bilingual or multilingual involves not only the learning of language as a linguistic system but also the interpretation of its cultural aspects, including personal and ethnic identity" (Lambert, 1980). In this study, the ethnic identity can hardly be recognized because of the language history in Moldova. The participants will be able to share their thoughts and feelings about how the language influences their identity.

"Communication and second language acquisition are closely tied together" (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996, p. 3). If people want to be understood, then then they have to make an extra effort, or even go the extra mile, to be understood. But when it comes to being understood in second or third languages, this desire to communicate clearly can bring some anxiety or unwillingness to try, and there are also differences in different social environments. People tend to act differently, perhaps by choice, either to make themselves more comfortable using a particular language or to make themselves more understood. In some situations, someone might even try to accommodate others to make sure they understand the conversation. That is one of

the examples that the participants shared: changing the language to accommodate others, which indicates how the respondent's identity shifts based on a given situation.

The closest study to this one regarding identity shift in multilingual speakers was done by Dewaele and Nakano (2012). In this research, they used 106 multilingual people with a total of a 31 different first languages and measured "the multilingual perceptions of feeling different when switching languages" (2012, p. 5). They took five different types of feelings and did a questionnaire in which the participants were able to choose using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (feel the same) to 5 (feel very different) (Dewaele and Nakano, 2012). "The results showed a systematic shift on most scales across the four languages, with participants feeling gradually less logical, less serious, less emotional and increasingly fake when using L2, L3 and L4" (Dewaele and Nakano, 2012, p. 7). The results suggest that the more comfortable you are in the language you speak, the less likely your feelings shift. This is why in this current study the focus is on identifying patterns showing an identity shift despite the fact that the participants feel quite comfortable in their L2 or L3 languages. The participants claim to be proficient in each language, therefore it will be fair to measure according to their claims and the number of speakers they interact with daily to prove if the hypotheses are true.

Dewaele and Pavlenko had a few approaches that were quite similar to some ideas that were brought up at the beginning of this study. Others will not be used: for example, having participants tell the same story in different languages to see how different the story turns out (2012, p. 3). This did not seem appealing because it felt more like playing a speech game, like "broken phone". It does not matter how many times the story will be told, eventually some things will be omitted or added.

Another way of finding out how people feel using different languages could have been to take a personality test (Dewaele and Nakano, 2012, p. 4). This approach could have been a little more effective than the previous one mentioned, but instead a new approach was chosen for the current study. There were others who did actually try the Big-Five personality test; Dewaele described Wilson's research in 2008, which indicated "a negative relationship between Extraversion and feeling different when operating in a different language" (2012, p. 4). They also found that the student with the less proficient level in a language most definitely felt different, which further suggests that the less comfortable someone is in a language he or she knows, the more likely they will feel different while switching languages (Dewaele and Nakano, 2012, p. 4).

This is why Dewaele used the next approach to rate the feelings people have while switching languages. The Likert-scale values allowed the researchers to compare how participants felt in their different languages, and whether those values linked to independent variables such as self-perceived proficiency level and the frequency of use of languages (Dewaele and Nakano, 2012, p. 5).

Studying the perception of identity shift in multilingual speakers increases understanding of fluidity in identity in additional language-acquisition contexts. Such understandings may help in second-language acquisition research, language teaching, or immigrant assimilation.

Summary

"Every person has an accent. Your accent carries the story of who you are" (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1329). But what happens to that identity when people are fluent speakers of a second or third language? Do people perceive an identity change when they change languages, specifically regarding the way they think (cognition), the way they feel (affect), and the way they interact

with others (social behavior)? These questions, or ones like them, have motivated a range of research studies, but very few have looked at these variables using a case study approach, and no one has examined these variables involving speakers who are fluent in the socio-politically charged languages of Russian, Moldovan-Romanian, and English. Russian and Moldovan-Romanian are languages spoken by people who have been in social, cultural, and political conflict for centuries, most recently throughout the Soviet Union era, and even up to recent post-Soviet conflicts.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Methodology and Ethical Issues

This is a case study. Therefore, the number of participants was chosen by the amount of work that could be done and the amount of usable data that could be collected, including the interviews. Three main subjects were chosen to be interviewed and give a self-report on specific information for this research.

For this case study, the participants speak three fluent languages. Their native languages are first, Romanian; second, Russian; and third, English. These participants are females, ages 31-32, originally from Moldova.

The subjects were selected from the researcher's own pool of contacts. The researcher emailed, called, or texted them to invite them to participate in the case study. Once the researcher had an appointment set up to do an interview with them individually, she explained that she had a set of interview questions for them, and she explained the type of procedure she would use for the interview and how she was planning on recording the interview for the data collection. Also, she told them about the consent form and asked them to sign it when they met. The researcher made sure they knew that the audio recording would be used only by the researcher and that no one else would have access to it. After the research study ended, the audio recordings would be deleted from the hard drive where the audio files were to be kept during the research.

The interview questions were written in three different languages: Romanian, Russian, and English. The researcher assumed that most participants would be willing to use Romanian, Russian, or English only. The next chapter will show the results of the analysis and the findings.

During the interviews, a digital recorder was present. The interviews included closed questions, open questions, and times in which the participants could feel free to share anything on the matter being discussed.

After the data was collected, the participants were thanked and told that that the analysis part would be done by the researcher. They were also told that when the research was completed, they would get a chance to read the conclusion.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher. Afterward, the researcher started analyzing the data by writing a descriptive narrative report and looking for differences. The main focus of a case study is the interpretation of the data that has been collected. Therefore, the researcher wrote up a descriptive report about each participant's interview, with examples given during the interview.

During the field work, the focus was in searching for differences and consistencies that could help increase understanding of how people communicate in the languages they know and how they perceive a shift in their identities if they have to.

Participants

In order to participate in this research study, the participants had to speak three languages fluently: Romanian-Moldovan, Russian, and English. The researcher chose three females, originally from Moldova, ages 31-32. They all had to have an educational background, be available to meet for the interview for about an hour, and be willing to share anything in relation to language use. These criteria determined which participants were chosen. The following is a table with the background of each of the participants and self-report of the number of people they communicate daily in each language.

Table 2: An overview of the background of the participants.

First name	**Romina**	**Nina**	**Larisa**
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Age	31	32	31
First Language	Romanian	Romanian	Romanian
Second Language	Russian	Russian	Russian
Third Language	English	English	English
Other Languages	Spanish	Spanish, German	Spanish
Degree Held	BA in Psychology/BA in IR	BA Academy of Economic studies	Political science and international relations, and foreign security
Ethnicity	Moldovan	Moldovan	Moldovan
Years lived in Moldova	19	22	21
Years lived in U.S.	9 years	10 years	9 years
Years lived in other countries	0	0	0
People in the Moldovan community they interact with daily (including family members overseas)	10	15	10
People in the Russian community they interact with daily (including family members overseas)	2	13	3
People in the American community they interact with daily (including family members overseas)	30	40	30
People in other communities they interact with daily (including family members overseas)	10	2	10

Interviews

The requirements of doing a case study were harder than expected. To conduct a successful interview, someone must acquire a set of conversational skills to ask the right questions. According to Kvale, “an interview is literally an interview, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale, 2009, p. 2).

There were a number of research questions. Mainly the focus was to see if there were differences in how people think, feel, or behave when they use the different languages they know. The first thing was to look at the differences regarding cognitive identity; namely, how do people think in their second language? The second thing was to look at differences of the affects and attitudes of how people feel when they speak their third or second language compared to the first. Then the last thing was to examine social behavior: How do people act when they use their second or third language? Do they tend to be more social, or the opposite?

The following are the types of interview questions used in this study. Most of the questions are closed questions; some are open questions in order to let the subjects speak freely and share anything they want to about their language use.

1. **Questions about how people think in the language they speak.** Here are some examples of questions used: a) In what language do you usually think? b) Do you accidentally or on purpose mix up languages when you think in a certain situation? c) Have you noticed in what language you dream? d) What language do you prefer to think in? e) Does your mood change when you use a certain language? f) In what language do you read numbers? g) Why do you think this happens?
2. **Questions about how people act when they use a certain language**. Here are some examples of questions used: a) Can you tell if you act differently using certain languages? b) How come? c) Do you find yourself using more gestures in using one language than the other languages? d) What body language do you prefer the most when you speak Romanian/Russian/English? e) Do you become self-aware of how you behave when you use a certain language? f) Do you try to change the way you act in a certain language in

order to accommodate others or yourself? g) How do you see yourself when you use the languages you know?

3. **Questions about how you feel when you use a certain language.** Here are some examples of questions used: a) How do you feel when you speak Romanian/Russian/English among the people who do not know these languages? b) How do you feel when you have to change a language in a group of people in order to accommodate them and to help them understand the conversation? c) How does it feel when you know so many languages? d) How do you feel towards each language you know? e) How do you think it affects you when you use a certain language in a situation where you could easily use a different one? f) Does it make you feel superior to other people knowing a certain language? g) Which language do you feel has more power? h) Is there a preference for you which language you would like to use at home/work/friends? i) Tell me anything about how it makes you feel when you use a certain language.
4. **An interview with family members/co-workers/friends about how they see the participants when they use a certain language.** Most of the questions will be similar to what the main participants were asked but slightly changed in order to address a different point of view. Here are some questions: a) How do you see your friend/co-worker/family member when they use a certain language? b) Is she more upbeat or quiet when she uses a certain language? c) Can you tell if she acts differently using certain languages? d) How come? e) Do you find her using more gestures in one language than the other language? f) Do you think she becomes self-aware of how she behaves when she uses a certain language? g) Do you think she tries to change the way she acts in using a certain language in order to accommodate others or herself?

The researcher believed that these questions would provide a good amount of data. During the interviews, other questions were asked as follow-up questions. There were extra questions and self-reports made in order to get all the information needed for this case study. The researcher made a sociolinguistic profile for each of the three main participants.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the case study, the focus was on how people perceive a difference in their identity in different languages within different circumstances. Thus, the researcher looked for the participants' opinions and experiences and interviewed a few people that interact with them daily. The interviews last for approximately one hour each. During the interview, the researcher made notes but mostly let the interviews flow on their own to avoid getting distracted. After the interviews were finished, the researcher listened to the recordings a few times and made more notes. After that, the researcher wrote up individual reports on each of the participants.

The interviews are gathered to obtain knowledge of how people perceive their identity in second or third languages. This research may provide some behavioral differences in trilingual speakers regarding how people interact while using the languages they are highly proficient in. For example, do they perceive an attitude change in different environments when they use a certain language? Do they perceive that they think differently when using their second and third languages? If so, what are the differences? Do they perceive that they act differently when using their second and third languages? If so, what are the differences?

The data was analyzed in a narrative format. Each research questioned was addressed according to each participant's self-report data and interview data. The keywords were selected from the interview responses, aligned with the interview questions. Some of the keywords were

also selected based on previous studies, but regarding personality matter. In this case study was focused on *identity* instead.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

The overall findings are summarized regarding the three main participants, and then a general background of each subject is given. All three participants' experiences in the different environments are analyzed extensively and described in full detail in a narrative form. For each participant's self-report, I limited the questions to a few of the environments I thought were best to discuss.

The following are the research questions: (1) Do people perceive that they think differently when using their second and third languages? If so, what are the differences? (2) Do people perceive that they have different set of affects and attitudes when using their second and third languages? If so, what are the differences? (3) Do people perceive that they act differently when using their second and third languages? If so, what are the differences?

The Perception of Identity Shift Differences in Our Case Study

The interviews with the participants are intended to give a self-report of their different relationships—for example, with coworkers, friends, and family members. Each participant gave an approximate percentage representing how frequently they use each language in those different relationships.

Building a sociolinguistic profile of our participants will help us choose the type of measurement we want to examine. All of the other studies have used models of measurement, but upon careful consideration, the researcher decided to use the self-report method in this case, deciding the participants were the ones best qualified to describe their own situations. It was hoped that as the participants are questioned throughout the interview, they will notice some differences in their identity shift. The data is all about how they, the participants, see themselves and challenge their own thinking while being asked different type of questions.

There are several keywords that will be used to analyze the interviews of each participant. The keywords were selected from the interview answers, aligned with the research questions. These keywords are the following: thinking, dreaming, feeling, code-switching, moods, counting numbers, conflict, behavior, body language, self-image, accommodating, confidence, preference, and attitude. As we see a small but significant difference within the terms, we examine whether a perception of identity shift is happening. As much as the participants might claim that they act the same or feel the same when switching languages, we will examine the narrative we have from each participant to reach a conclusion.

The researcher built the questionnaire according to her own experience, intuition, and knowledge of the three languages involved in this case study. She consulted other studies, and most of them followed the psychological-emotional questionnaire, some questions of which align with the ones used in this study.

Some of the data may perhaps appear superficial because this case study did not use any specific model or replicate other research. It is the researcher's hope that the reader will come to a new view regarding the findings and the way the researcher approached them.

For instance, the researcher pondered the following question: Is it true that if people dream in the language they are learning, they are on their way to master it? We cannot really answer this question, but it can be posited that our subconscious is the strongest indicator we have when it comes to recently acquired knowledge.

That is why the researcher wanted to see if participants have noticed a subconscious use of the second or third languages, such as in dreams. And so, by asking such questions, the researcher hoped the participants would be able to share their experiences freely and naturally, and thus allow the researcher to find the keywords that indicated a perception in identify shift.

Each of the keywords will be noted as a self-report from the participant, followed by the researcher's view and then a conclusion.

A recent study was done on finding if dreaming in two different languages could provide any useful data to therapists, by using bilingual dreams to help their clients in "cultural identity conflicts help and become more cross-culturally competent" (Lum & Wade, 2016, p. 1). In this study "the main theme was the *ambicultural self* in the dream, referring to a culturally flexible dream figure able to speak the dreamer's first and second languages to [act as a] bridge between the protagonist's two cultures to accomplish the dream task of somehow resolving cultural conflicts" (Lum & Wade, 2016, p. 1).

Romina—Participant 1: A Self-report and Background

Romina was originally born in Moldova. She grew up bilingual, learning Russian as her second language. Romina moved to the U.S. about nine years ago, and she started to learn English in high school when she was fifteen years old. She married Sam, her husband, three years ago; his primary language is Polish. They have a two-year-old daughter, and both parents talk to their daughter in English. Romina hopes that her daughter, Isabella, will be able to pick up some Polish from her grandparents, but Romina does not have the desire or time to learn Polish herself.

The main reason to have Romina in this research study is her unique background of language use. At the beginning of the interview, Romina firmly said she maintains her Moldovan identity, but overall she has learned that it changes overtime and especially when multiple languages are involved. Such change is not a bad thing, but it is important that Romina understood and noticed the differences in herself while switching languages. Romina chose the Romanian language to respond to the interview questions.

Table 3: Analyzing research question number 1 with participant number 1

This is a self-report of the participant, the researcher's view on the answers of the participants, and a conclusion of what has been found.

Romina	**Self-report**	**The Researcher's View**
Thinking	Romina reports that English mostly used while thinking.	She doesn't seem to have a preference in what language she likes to think. English seems to be predominant in her life, further strengthening her statement that she mostly thinks in English.
Dreaming	She reports that it's mixed. It depends on the context. Romanian/English.	It is normal to start dreaming in the language of the host country you live in.
Code-switching	Romina reports that it is not intended.	Throughout the interview she kept using Romanian words/phrases to express herself.
Counting numbers	She reports that she starts counting from <5 in Romanian >5 in English.	It seems an ordinary choice to her. More like an attachment from L1.
Conflicts	Romina refers to English in conflict situations.	Mostly because people she would argue with only speak English. L3 might have become the comfort zone for her in conflict situations.

It is generally agreed that dreams are a connection to our subconscious. When I asked Romina in what language has she been dreaming, her response was, “It’s mixed.” To explain what she meant by that, I share the following example: she said that she will dream about her home in Moldova, but the language she is using is English.

It is my theory that her identity is in conflict. Of course, dreamers generally do not notice the implications of their dreams, but to an outsider, it seems as if the languages in her mind are struggling for dominance.

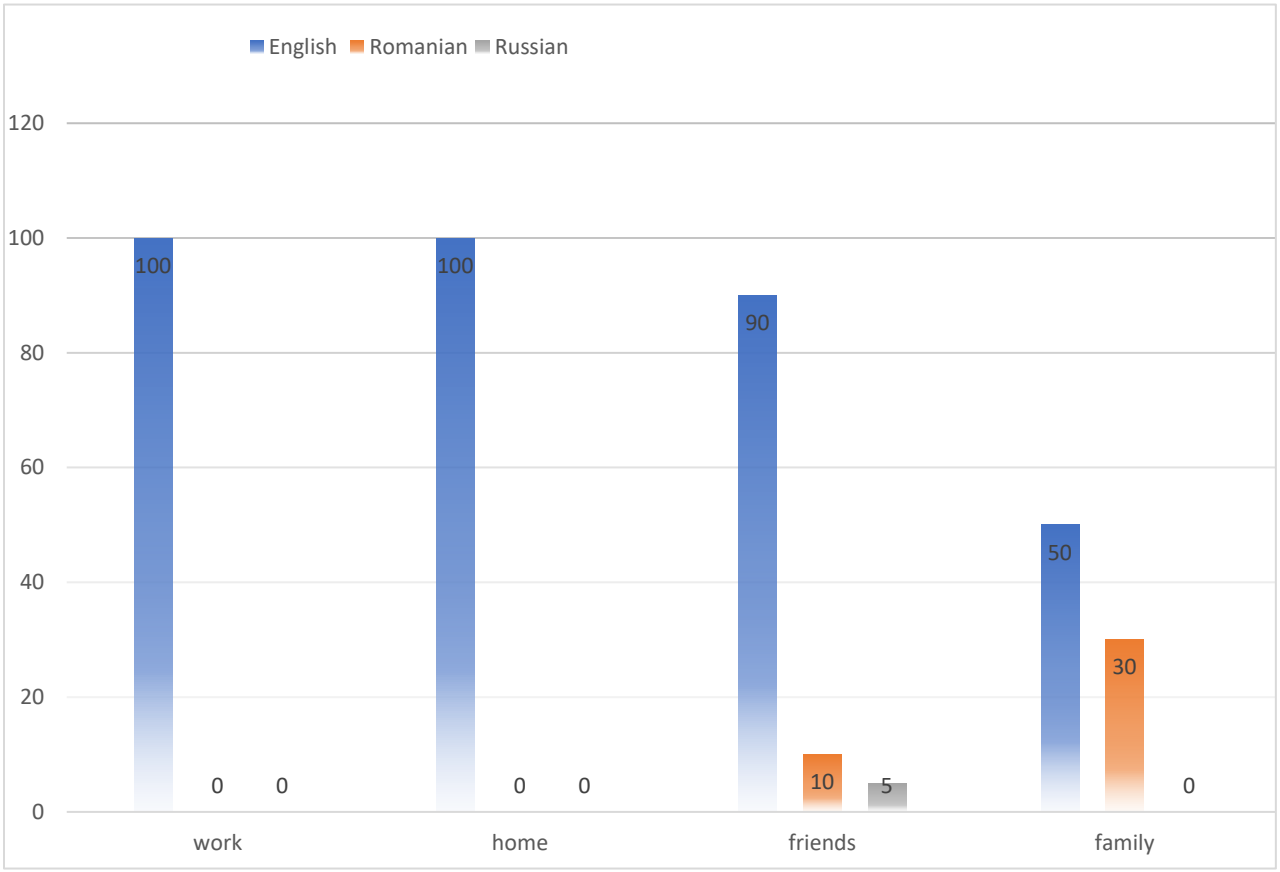


Figure 1*: Romina's self-report on language usage.*

From Figure 1, we can see the approximate frequency of each language that Romina uses daily. English has become the predominant language. Romina has no difficulty switching to any of the languages she knows but sometimes has to force herself to find the right words in a conversation. Her Russian is perhaps fading, although she wishes to improve it. She believes that improving her Russian will be rewarding for her. Romina's dream job is to work one day for the government of the country she is currently residing in, and knowing Russian would make her a more valuable candidate. She believes that her Romanian is not as important to know, therefore she does not put in as much effort to improve it or to maintain it. The only real opportunity she has to practice the Romanian language is within her own family, half of whom already feel more

comfortable speaking to her in English than in Romanian. For example, she now talks to her sister and brother mostly in English. Romina's parents are the only ones that do not speak any English, and thus when talking with them, she occasionally has a hard time expressing herself fully.

Table 4: Analyzing research question number 2 with participant number 1

This is a self-report of the participant, the researcher's view on the answers, and a conclusion of what has been found.

Romina	**Self-report**	**The Researcher's View**
Moods	Romina reports no change while her moods change.	She seems quite formal when speaking in English. She is more friendly when using Romanian.
Behavior	Romina reports no change while her behavior changes.	It is difficult to observe a change in this aspect within the span of an hour. As for her own report, she claims she's the same. Throughout the interview, she did seem the same, but happier to be using Romanian and English at the same time.
Body language	She reports that her body language is mixed.	She doesn't seem to see any difference in body language switching from one language to another. She does use a lot of hand gestures as she talks.

Self-image	Romina sees herself Americanized, meaning that she has adopted to the American culture, and a lot more than she expected.	Romina claims to be more Americanized because of her English use. She uses American sayings, phrases and interjections while speaking Romanian or Russian.
Accommodating	She feels anxious when she has to accommodate others so that they could understand the conversations.	She tries too hard to express herself when needed. English is the way out for her. If she doesn't know a word in Rom/Rus, then English is her "safe card."

Russian has never made a huge impact on her; only when she moved to the U.S. did she learn that Russian was a good language to know for a variety of reasons. Romina's feelings toward Russian are mixed; she mostly feels proud that she knows it but she struggles with herself in actually using it. Her favorite aspect of Russian language influence is when neither Russians nor Romanians will understand a Moldavan joke, which is a mixture of culture and language that cannot be fully translated into either of the other contexts. Moldovans have created a "code language" of sorts that only Moldavians understand. I believe that this specific code language creates a unique identity for Moldovans speaking Romanian; hence, some still call the language "Moldovan".

Romina seems to be very expressive in her L1, using a lot of hand gestures, and claims to be the same way in her L2 and L3 language. She does not see a difference and thinks it is all the same.

Each language has its own speaking and writing style. Because English has become more predominant in Romina's life, she did notice that she uses quite a few American phrases while speaking Romanian. For example, the following is a passage from Romina's interview:

> *I feel I've become more Americanized, and I'll tell you why. I had people tell me that I do those "American sounds" when I'm speaking Romanian, for example like: "yeahh", "oh, that's so nice!". My friends would be like: "What's going on?" Moldavians don't do/say that. I'm using too much "ok" in Romanian. One time I was trying so hard to speak in Romanian with my friends in Moldova, so someone bought some type of meat and I said something like: "Oh no, really?!" Moldavians don't say or react like that. They don't overreact like that. They eventually looked strange at me.*

This would be a good example of how an individual changes his or her identity when switching from one language to another. In this case, Romina is trying hard to maintain her Moldovan identity, although, in using American phrases, she is aware that she has changed.

Romina use to get annoyed when people pointed out her accent. She actually hated it when people seemed to identify her as "Russian" instead of asking her where she was from. She prefers that question over the statement that she sounds like a Russian. At some point, she overcame that reaction and started to embrace the fact that she was identified as a foreigner in her host country. She claims that her life became easier, and she started to like the idea of being able to speak fluently so many languages.

Romina likes to use the language that is more predominant in a conversation than one no one else knows. She thinks it is disrespectful to speak in a foreign language when your peers do not know it.

Table 5: Analyzing research question number 3 with participant number 1

This is a self-report of the participant, the researcher's view on the answers of the participant, and a conclusion of what has been found.

Romina	**Self-report**	**The Researcher's View**
Feeling	Romina reports that she is more accepting, especially towards knowing Russian.	Romina loves her first language, but knowing how important is to know Russian, she tries to improve her Russian and seems to be proud that she knows it.
Confidence	She feels proud to know all the languages she does know.	She claims to be lucky that knows three languages. She takes pride in her language abilities. It wasn't easy for her; it took a lot of time to become semi-fluent in English.
Preference	Romina reports that she does not have a preference which language to speak.	She doesn't seem to care what language she uses. Any environment she is in already has an assigned language, and she does not mind that fact.

Attitude	She reports that she is biased. One day she loves the fact that she knows Russian, the next day she will be tired speaking English.	She has good and positive experience in all three languages, and loves the fact that she is able to understand more people than others do. Her attitude toward any of the languages is thus balanced with both positive and negative impressions.

Romina loves Romanian (L1). As for Russian, she is embracing it a lot more, knowing that is a complex language, not easy to speak and especially write in; she seems to be proud of knowing it. She used to not like Russian so much because it was forced on Moldovans when Moldova used to be part of the Soviet Union. As for English, she has no strong emotions toward this language; she only recognizes the fact that is an international language and makes you a more marketable as a job candidate.

Since Russian seems to be less prominent in Romina's life compared to other two languages she knows, she tends to be too agitated over the mistakes she makes. Here's an example from the interview:

> *I had some Russian friends a while ago, and we planned one day to go to Botanical Garden. So, I overslept. I worked the night before and I just couldn't help stay awake the next morning. I went there to meet them alter of course, and then tell them: "Guys I'm so sorry! Я переспала! (slept with someone), because I got home late last night from work". And they are like: "Переспала???!". And*

then they tell me: "You mean 'Проспала!' (overslept). There was a lot of laughter.

Some people worry about or get embarrassed because of the mistakes they make; this influences their identity when they switch the languages. The more comfortable one is in another language, the less likely it is that one acts the same way in speaking the other languages as one would in one's native language. A speaker of a second or third language tends to act more like the native speakers of the language because the learner has adopted the culture and mannerisms of that language community.

On a scale of 1 to 10, Romina was asked to identify her comfort level of communication in each of her languages. Romina provided the following answers:

1. On a scale from 1 to 10 what is your comfort level while speaking English? *10*
2. On a scale from 1 to 10 what is your comfort level while speaking Russian? *7*
3. On a scale from 1 to 10 what is your comfort level while speaking Romanian? *9*

From this report, it seems she feels the most comfortable speaking in English. Therefore, her identity changes daily as she switches the languages. For instance, identity shift happens when she talks to her parents, who do not know any English. As we know from Romina's interview, her Russian seems to be fading, but she is certain that her level of communication is intermediate. And in this case, she does change her identity while speaking Russian. She becomes a lot more aware of what words she is using because she does not want to make mistakes, and she pushes herself to sound confident.

When we speak about the perception of identity shift in Romina's case, it means that there is a major difference that influences her perception of identity change: her proficiency level in each language. If we were to test her languages, we could determine her comfort level in each

language. The more comfortable she is in Romanian or Russian for example, the stronger her Moldovan identity will be present, but since we notice a huge difference in her language use among Russian relations, for instance, which can be the cause of her Russian fading away. Romina finds herself struggling to keep her Moldovan identity; according to her, if she improves the languages she will be able to keep that part of her identity for a little longer.

Nina—Participant 2: A Self-report and Background

Nina was originally born in Moldova. She grew up bilingual, learning Russian as her second language. Her Russian was not advanced until she moved to the U.S.; only then she was able to improve it and use it a lot more than she did in Moldova. Nina has a nine-year-old son, Alexandru, whom she spoke of frequently during the interview. His primary language is English; Nina desires to teach him her mother tongue, therefore she does her best to speak to him in Romanian at home. However, sometimes he responds in Russian, and then Nina automatically switches to Russian.

The main reason to have Nina in this research study is her unique background of language usage. Nina went through a lot of changes, and since English was her third language, with little practice she still managed to improve it and is quite confident in it now. Perhaps Nina is the only one that has about the same number of people in her life in each linguistic category, which helps her to keep all languages in use. If we were to test her languages to find her comfort level, then perhaps we could describe her identity shift more precisely.

Table 6: Analyzing the research question number 1 with participant number 2

This is a self-report of the participant, the researcher's view on the answers of the participant, and a conclusion of what has been found.

Nina	**Self-report**	**The Researcher's View**

Thinking Dreaming	Nina reports that Moldovan is the language she thinks the most. She reports that she dreams in Moldovan.	Nina confirms that it is much easier for her to think in her own tongue than in other languages she knows. But because she tends to use Russian a lot at work, she thinks in Russian there. She is certain that most of her dreams are all in Moldovan.
Code-switching	To her when switching languages are not intended.	To Nina, code-switching comes naturally and on a daily basis. She doesn't pay attention when it happens; she does it automatically.
Counting numbers	Nina reports that she will count depending on language she is using at the time.	She seems to count a lot less in English than in other languages. And when she does it, she has to count it out loud. If one day she uses Russian more than any other language, she counts in Russian.
Conflicts	She reports that depending on the person she is talking to.	Nina prefers using the language of the person with whom she argues. She feels it is the best way to express herself to him or her. If she had to choose from all the languages she speaks, Romanian would be

		her primary language in conflict situations.

Nina is the only participant that claims Moldovan as her native language, not calling it Romanian. As we mentioned before in the literature review, some people still call Romanian "Moldovan." The reason for this is difficult to explain, but it is one factor that shows an identity pattern in our research. However, throughout the account of Nina's interview we will be using the term *Romanian* instead of *Moldovan* in order to remain consistent with the rest of the thesis.

The following is Nina describing how she acts when switching languages:

> *Perhaps when I speak English, I'm trying to make it more fancy. When I use Russian, I think in most cases, I cannot say it happens all the time but I think I'm trying to underline my accent, to make it more vivid and obvious sound more like Russian.*

Table 7: Analyzing research question number 2 with participant number 2

This is a self-report of the participant, the researcher's view on the answers of the participant, and a conclusion of what has been found.

Nina	**Self-report**	**The Researcher's View**
Moods	Nina reports no change when her moods change.	She does not think that her mood changes when switching from one language to another. It depends more on whom she is speaking with.

Behavior	Nina reports that she will change her behavior in order to sound different.	According to Nina, when she speaks English, for example, she tries to make it sound “fancy”. When she speaks Russian, she tries to “underline her accent”, to make it sound more like Russian.
Body language	She reports that her body language is mixed. Mostly when speaking Romanian and Russian.	Nina seems to use a lot of hand gestures when she speaks in Romanian or Russian; according to her, it helps to express herself better. But when it comes to English, she feels that her hand gestures are delayed because she is thinking too hard of what to say.
Self-image	Nina reports that her Romanian is more open. Using Russian, she feels like a “brat” Using English, she is more careful.	It is quite interesting how she was able to identify the way she is in each language. In Romanian, she can fully express herself. When she speaks Russian, she says she feels she is acting like a “brat”, explaining that she is trying to imitate someone else. As for English, she is a lot more careful and ends up listening to others more, and thus she learns a lot of new things.

Accommodating	She reports that she is willing and positive when she needs to accommodate others.	She cares about people around her, and does her best to accommodate them when it comes to language understanding.

Nina likes using all three languages all the time, but from what she said, she makes an extra effort to sound better in the language she is using. It shows how she is shifting her own identity through language. Does she stereotype herself? Perhaps. The following is another passage from her interview that adds to what she described earlier:

> *I think in Romanian I am more opened, and I feel that I'm expressing myself best. In Russian, I think I'm more of a brat, it's like I'm trying to imitate someone and I'm not myself a 100%, because it is not my own language. And when it comes to English I think I need to be more careful, because I'm usually expecting to find out more things in English or to listen to different opinions. ... I'm more reserved when it comes to English.*

She seems to naturally switches languages, but from the interview I could tell that she acted differently when speaking Russian.

Table 8: Analyzing research question number 3 with participant number 2

This is a self-report of the participant, the researcher's view on the answers of the participant, and a conclusion of what has been found.

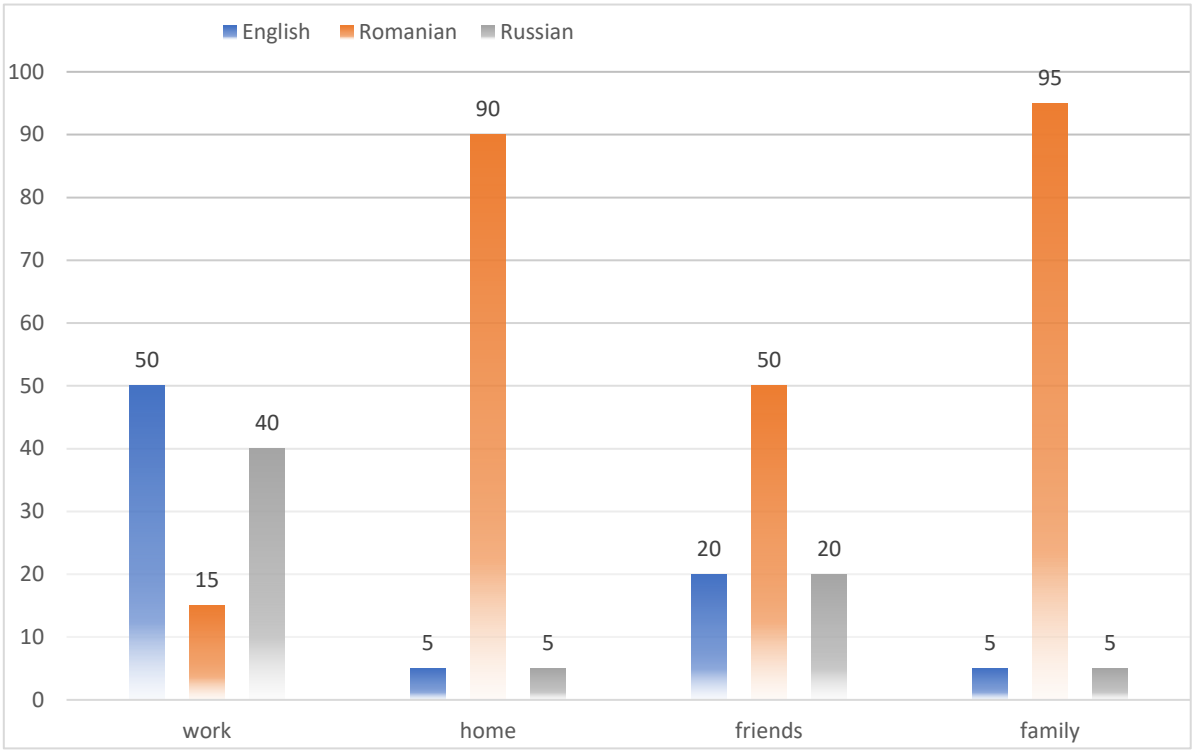
Nina	**Self-report**	**The Researcher's View**
Feeling	Nina reports that knowing all three languages feels to	Nina feels a step ahead of others because of her language abilities, but at the same time she doesn't take pride in all this.

	have power.	
Confidence	She reports that she feels lucky knowing all three languages.	To Nina, the fact that she knows three different languages seems to be luck.
Preference	Nina reports that she is indifferent of what language she would prefer.	She has no preference in which language she will use, as long as everyone understands.
Attitude	She reports that for each language her attitude is different.	Moldovan is her native language, and she loves it. Russian reminds her of "Putin", because she sees him as a dictator and manipulator, and that's the same way she sees the language.

Nina seems to be self-conscious about her proficiency in English. She does not let herself use it so much for two reasons: first, she does not have the chance to use it a lot, and second, she claims it is not as strong as it should be. Here is what she says in the interview:

> *When I use Romanian and Russian it happens on its own without overthinking. Sometimes I can say too much or too little using these two languages.*

From Figure 2, we can see that Nina's predominant language is Romanian. She seems to balance it with the other two languages. Perhaps the percentage from this chart does not show that, but from the interview, I could tell that she uses Russian on a daily basis with her friends. Her family consists of her son and her mother. Nina is divorced, and her ex-husband is a Russian native speaker, which explains why her son will sometimes answer in Russian rather than



Romanian.

Figure 2: Nina's self-report on language usage.

On a scale of 1 to 10, Nina was asked to identify her comfort level in the languages she knows well. Nina's answers:

1. On a scale from 1 to 10 what is your comfort level while speaking English? *7*
2. On a scale from 1 to 10 what is your comfort level while speaking Russian? *9*
3. On a scale from 1 to 10 what is your comfort level while speaking Romanian? *10*

Romanian seems to be Nina's strongest language. When speaking Russian, from time to time she would mispronounce a Russian word or use a "Moldovan" word instead; perhaps that is why she gave herself a 9 out of 10. As for her English, I would agree with the number she gave herself. She could use some improvement in that direction. Because her English is not as proficient as other languages, it creates a small gap when it comes to perceive her identity shift. In the interview, she would choose either Romanian or Russian to speak in instead of English because of her comfort level or proficiency. That does not mean that her identity does not shift when she switches to English. Her perception of identity shift is simply more apparent with other languages. For example, to identify an identity change, we need at least one keyword or two; in her case, we have more than five. She feels not only *self-conscious* but also *embarrassed* when making mistakes, she *overthinks* when speaking, she is more *quiet* than usual, and she is more *reserved* and *short* when speaking in a conversation.

Larisa—Participant 3: A Self-report and Background

Larisa was born in Moldova. She grew up bilingual, learning Russian as her second language. Larisa moved to the U.S. about nine years ago. She is married and has a two-year-old daughter (Nicole); her husband is originally from Moldova as well. Her parents live in the same house with them. Everyone at home speaks Romanian as their first language, but when speaking to Nicole, they all mix English with Romanian, thinking that Nicole would not completely understand if they spoke entirely in Romanian.

The main reason to have Larisa in our case study was her unique language background, just as with the other two participants. She is the only one who tried to improve her English in order to get rid of her accent; according to her, it would help a lot more in the work environment and to be accepted in her community.

Table 9: Analyzing research question number 1 with participant number 3

This is a self-report of the participant, the researcher's view on the answers of the participant, and a conclusion of what has been found.

Larisa	**Self-report**	**The Researcher's View**
Thinking	She reports that it depends on the subject.	Larisa tends to think in the language she is using at that moment. But it takes some time to adjust to Romanian by the time she gets home, since she is using English a lot throughout the day.
Dreaming	Larisa reports that it depends on the environment she is in.	Her language is set depending on the people she is talking to and language they use. And her dream will reflect on whatever has happened the day before.
Code-switching	She reports that is on purpose.	During the interview, she was consistent on using Romanian only, but occasionally she would insert a phrase from a different language to use a saying that does not translate so well into Romanian.
Counting numbers	She reports that she always counts in Romanian.	She counts in Romanian only to avoid getting confused. Larisa is certain that in Romanian she will be 100% correct.

Conflicts	She reports that Romanian and English would be the languages she would use in conflict situations.	In most cases, she uses Romanian, but not at work or with her husband, Marin. Even though her husband's first language is Romanian, they both prefer to use English over Romanian.

Larisa tends to think in the language she is using at that moment. To her, that happens automatically in most cases. But when she comes home at the end of the day, she has a hard time switching to Romanian. It takes some time for her to know what to say when she is talking to her parents, for example. These are her own words from the interview:

I have to think how I can tell about this to my mom, then it's in Romanian.

This happens when she needs to first speak to most people in her family except her husband. Larisa only thinks in English with her husband, Marin, because she best explains herself in this language when she talks or argues with him. She claims this is because she has begun using English with her husband more than anyone else in the family or even among her friends. The following table is a self-report from the interview, including researcher's view and conclusion.

The reason Larisa switches the languages on purpose is to help her parents to learn English. She also does that with her daughter, Nicole. Larisa tells us that she does it "half and half". She thinks that her daughter understands more in English than Romanian. Larisa's husband speaks to their daughter in Romanian only.

From Figure 3, we can see Larisa's two dominant languages: Romanian and English, which is perhaps reaching the same level of proficiency as Romanian. Although, all her

languages seem to be quite balanced despite of the amount of time she spends speaking the former two.

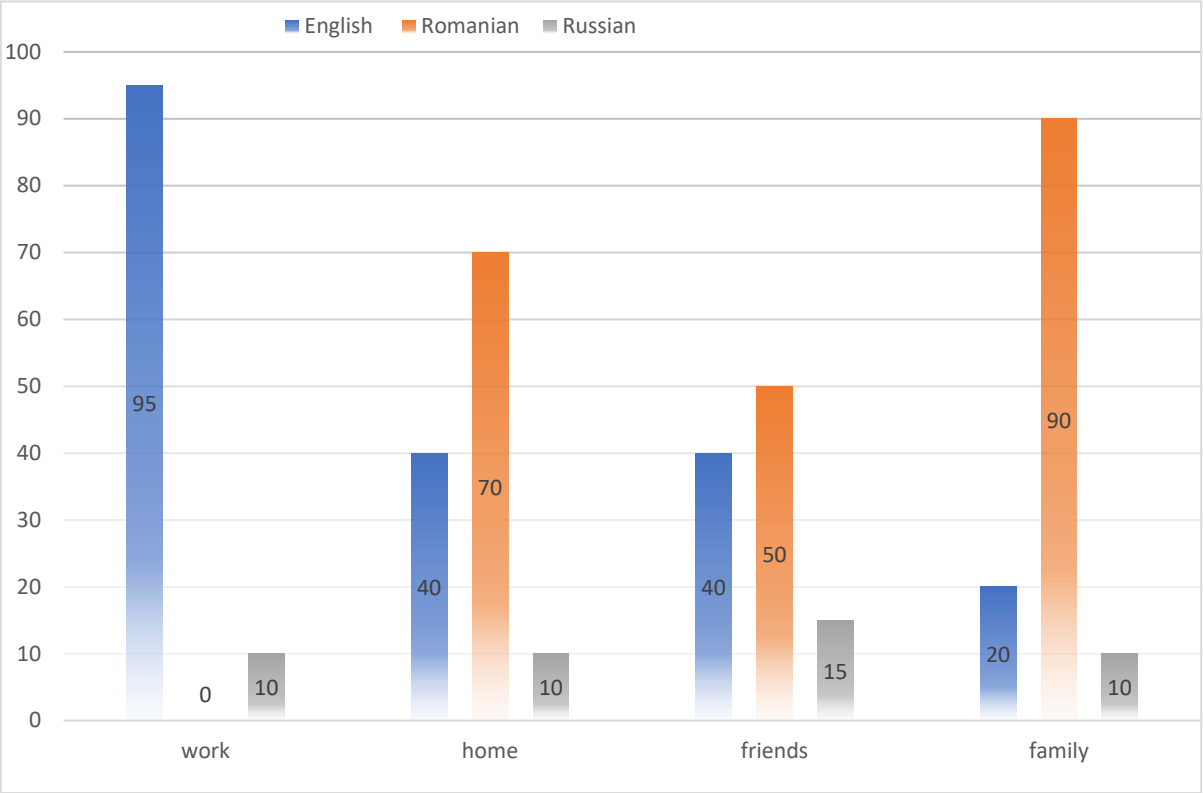


Figure 3: Larisa's self-report on language usage.

Table 10: Analyzing research question number 2 with participant number 3

This is a self-report of the participant, the researcher's view on the answers of the participant, and a conclusion of what has been found.

Larisa	**Self-report**	**The Researcher's View**
Moods	Larisa reports that she feels somewhat intimidated, but otherwise confident	She uses each language, some languages more on a daily basis than others. That is why she feels intimidated when she has to speak Russian. Overall she is really

		confident and takes pride knowing all three languages.
Behavior	She reports that is mixed, based on culture.	She seems to be aware of the culture differences of the languages she knows and she acts accordingly.
Body language	She reports that is mixed, based on language culture.	Larisa sees a change in her body language as she switches the language, but only in cases where she needs to make an extra effort in expressing herself. In other cases, the cause is her habits and/or where she comes from.
Self-image	Larisa reports that knowing all three languages have its own advantages and disadvantages.	She considers knowing all three languages an advantage because she can understand everyone. The disadvantage is her accent. She claims to have less opportunities in other type of jobs, because they would want a native speaker.

Accommodating	She reports that that she feels anxious when she needs to accommodates others.	In her own home, Larisa becomes quite aware of people that need help to understand the conversations going on. Because she has a mix of different friends with different language backgrounds, she uses the language the most people are likely to understand, no matter how many people are there.

Larisa feels somewhat intimidated only when it comes to Russian. She used to speak Russian more frequently in Moldova, and now she does not have the same environment she used to. Right now, she has a few friends that are Russian natives, and she likes to speak to them in Russian. Larisa would not want do otherwise, because it would show them disrespect.

In conflict situations, Larisa prefers Romanian. She uses English at work and when she argues with her husband, Marin, because it feels easier to express themselves to each other in that language. Here is what she says from the interview:

> *When I'm arguing with Marin, most of the time I have to write down first, and I'm using English. I don't know why but it feels shorter, and for example when I text him, my phone is already set for English. If I had to type in Romanian then I would have to think of a lot more words, to make sure he understands that I'm upset. When I'm typing in English a few words he then gets it right away.*

Throughout the interview, Larisa would use the word *culture* a lot. From this, we can assume she understands that language and culture are closely related. She is familiar with the

cultural differences with each language she knows, and based on that knowledge, Larisa does her best not to upset anyone as she talks. Here is another sample from the interview:

> *Because you know that their culture is different, and maybe somewhere your language or your accent doesn't make any impression and you are trying to use your head and hands to be understood. … As for Russian and Romanian, I don't think I'm that expressive, maybe sometimes when I don't know something or I'm not expressing myself correctly, then I'm trying to use more body language so that everyone could understand me, but at the same time when I do that I'm only trying to be nice. …*

When it comes to her self-imagine, Larisa tries her best to see the advantages and disadvantages of knowing all three languages. Larisa believes that her foreign accent means a lot of employers would not be willing to hire her because they believe she might lack 100% proficiency in English. In the interview, Larisa gives an example of someone trying to get hired at her company. Here is what she says:

> *I wanted to hire someone who was originally from India, and my manager didn't let me because his accent was too thick. I mean this is illegal for him not to hire him, but he still did it anyway. Even though that person was accessed by the manager, because he had nine years of customer service experience in the U.S., I already gave him the answer yes, that he was hired. And my boss, who was Syrian at that time didn't like his accent.*

Perhaps it was not just the accent in that case; unfortunately, we cannot know for certain. But because of that experience, Larisa hesitates to apply for job opportunities she could easily qualify for otherwise.

Table 11: Analyzing research question number 3 with participant number 3

This is a self-report of the participant, the researcher's view on the answers of the participant, and a conclusion of what has been found.

Larisa	**Self-report**	**The Researcher's View**
Feeling	She reports that her feelings towards each language are mixed and uncomfortable.	Larisa has mixed feelings toward each language she knows. The only time she feels uncomfortable is when she tries to accommodate a big group of people, and that shows when she switches the language.
Confidence	Larisa reports that is proud and lucky to know all three languages.	It might take some time to transition from one language to another, but she seems to be quite confident.
Preference	She reports that she prefers Romanian.	In most cases Larisa, cannot choose what language she speaks, but if she could, she would choose Romanian at home, English at work, and Russian with her friends.
Attitude	She reports that her attitude is persistent. improving each language.	Larisa is quite determined to help her parents learn English by talking to them in English. She believes it is an easy language to learn to speak if you want to. It bothers her when she is identified as Russian.

In a lot of cases, people guess where a person is from based on his or her accent. Most of our participants are identified as Russian. When Larisa is identified as Russian, she starts to get upset. Here is why:

> *I do not like to be identified as Russian. It does not mean I hate Russians. I just wished they would ask me instead," Where are you from?"*

On a scale of 1 to 10, Larisa was asked to identify her comfort level in the languages she knows well. Larisa's answer:

1. On a scale from 1 to 10 what is your comfort level while speaking English? *9*
2. On a scale from 1 to 10 what is your comfort level while speaking Russian? *9*
3. On a scale from 1 to 10 what is your comfort level while speaking Romanian? *10*

Larisa seems to be comfortable in all three languages, which is helpful in trying to perceive an identity shift. In the examples, she shares with us, we can see that it is her choice to feel a certain way and act according to the situation she is in. Because she has a preference for the language she wants to argue in, for example, it shows how her identity is quite determined. This kind of characteristic help us to identify her true self and how she tries to stay that way, but most of the time she cannot do so. We see Larisa generally accommodating in L1, determined in L3, and confident in L2. We also can see how she shifts such attitudes as she switches the languages.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This section includes a discussion of what the results of the data analysis suggest about the perception of identity shift in trilingual speakers and the differences that occur in the various situations the participants were questioned about. This discussion is organized according to each research question and followed by a presentation of the limitations and implications of this study and suggestions for future research.

Discussion

Below is a discussion of the data presented in Chapter 4: Results.

Discussion of Research Question 1

1. Do people perceive that think differently when using their second and third languages? If so, what are the differences?

According to Dewaele, "bilinguals show a slightly different face in one language compared to other" (Dewaele 2015). As we discussed each individual we interviewed, it became clear that they are all different but at the same time similar. After analyzing the self-report data of each participant, we found a few differences in how people think when using their second or third language. From chapter 4 we have the researcher's view and a conclusion of what was found.

When it comes to thinking, we chose a few factors that helped us determine these differences: for example, we asked them directly if they notice what language they think in, then we asked them about dreaming, code-switching, counting numbers, and conflict situations. These keywords helped us see the differences that occur when switching languages.

So, when it comes to thinking, most of the time the participants think in the language of their environment. At other times, the participant chooses what language to think in. But the

conclusion is that the dominant language will be the one in which the individual thinks. Therefore, it is a matter of choice of what language to think. The next question would be why they chose a specific language. For instance, is it because of their comfort level?

When it comes to dreaming, it is hard to collect data on the language of dreams since we can only rely on people's memory of their dreams. In our case study, the participants tend to believe that they choose which language to speak in dreams as well, and the language that is dominant will influence the most of their dreams. As for code-switching, each participant did this throughout the interview in order to express herself better, and because the participants knew that I spoke the languages they knew, they felt comfortable mixing them up.

Here is an example of how their identities were jumping from one language to another. They like to be identified as Moldovans, but when it comes to a different identity, they prefer the one where they speak English fluently and with little accent. In this case, English is starting to become the dominant language, and their Moldovan identify is trying to survive. Only the first participant, Romina, shows a strong evidence of losing her Moldovan identity because she is surrounded by her own people less and less. The only people she does speak Romanian with are her own family. My assumption would be that within a few decades she will lose her Moldovan identity completely. As for the other two participants, they both have families nearby and lots of friends to keep their Moldovan and even Russian identities in their lives.

The reason I chose to ask about "counting numbers" is because when we count something important, we do it in the language we trust will help us do it correctly. This question made all of our participants think for a bit before they would answer. Their answers showed that their L1 is their dominant language when it comes to counting, which in turn indicates that their Moldovan identity is the strongest.

In terms of conflict, our participants expressed different opinions, but mainly the L1 is what they would prefer to use most. Although, according to some of them, their identity changes when they have to switch from Romanian into English, because using English shows more confidence and strength when arguing with an L1 or L2 English speaker, and their proficiency in English is high enough they can manage a conflict situation without a problem. This ability even makes them feel superior.

Discussion of Research Question 2

2. Do people perceive that they have a different set of affects and attitudes when using their second and third languages? If so, what are these differences?

According to Marc Dewaele and Seiji Nakano's study (2012) about "multilinguals'" perceptions of feeling different when switching languages, the highest and most significant predictor of feelings shift would be the self-perceived proficiency level (p. 2). This holds true in my own experience; I have been asked numerous times if I change when I switch languages. The more common question I used to get was "Do you sound different when you speak a different language?" In terms of sound, they are asking if my personality changes. This is why I was curious to find out from others if they think they changed. And to my surprise, most of our participants thought they were the same until I started asking them specific questions.

This data collection might have been the hardest part of the research because a longer observation time would have been much better to determine if there were differences in affects and attitudes based on language use. The first three factors were difficult to determine since they relied heavily on the participants' memory. When it comes to moods and behavior, they claimed there was no change; as for body language, they said it depended on the culture and how much each culture gesticulates when talking. Throughout the interview, when the participants were

code-switching, each one of them had a slight change in her body language, which shows a difference in their identity.

The most interesting part of analyzing this data was to learn the *self-image* of each one of them. Romina, for example, claims to be "Americanized", and I would agree with that. When we chose to be in a different country than the one of our birth, we also accept a new beginning; the term "Americanized" signifies a part of identity we chose to have. Nina had the most interesting answers to the questions that triggered *self-image*: she said that when speaking Romanian, she is more open; in Russian, she feels like a "brat"; in English, she is more careful. From her answers, we can identify her proficiency (or perhaps her comfort) level in each language, but also, at the same time, how her perception of her identity really shifts *because* of her proficiency level.

Nina has the strongest community of people in her life for all three languages, and according to her, she does not change in terms of who she is when switching languages, but by the end of the interview, she changed her mind. She loved the idea of how different we can be when speaking a different language. Your voice changes, but it's more than that: a part of who you are is trying to reach out to those around you in order to be heard.

Our last participant, Larisa, finds advantages and disadvantages in knowing all three languages fluently. According to her, the accent would be the disadvantage because she believes it limits her employment opportunities.

The last factor was accommodation; two of them claimed to be anxious about accommodating others. In contrast, Nina feels positive about accommodating others and is willing to switch languages when needed because she has strong relationships with people who require that extra effort. The others, including myself, would be a bit anxious about accommodating others because all of our lives we had to accommodate in our own country, and

that necessity created burdensome feelings. The fact that we moved to another country made us even more anxious; we had to make an actual effort to learn the new language so *we* would not become the burden.

Discussion of Research Question 3

3. Do people perceive that they act differently when using their second and third languages? If so, what are these differences?

The factors we used for this research question were the following: *feeling* (how the participant feels toward each of her languages), *confidence* (how confident the participant is in each of her languages), *preference* (which language the participant prefers), and *attitude* (how the participant acts when speaking each language).

A great example of an identity shift is how each participant's *feels* toward each of the languages she knows. Romina, for example, loves her L1, but her L2 is not the strongest; but knowing how important is to know Russian, she makes an effort to improve it. When it comes to Larisa, she has mixed feelings towards each language, but only because of the accommodation issue. Nina is the most positive in this case: she feels "power" in knowing all three languages and being able to use them all the time, but she also claims that she doesn't take pride in knowing the languages.

When it comes to *confidence,* they all feel proud and lucky to know these languages. In this case, the word *proud* indicates how well they know the language, and the level of their pride for each language increases in accordance with their proficiency. For example, knowing Russian in Moldova meant they are always "accommodating" others, but being here in the U.S., knowing Romanian, Russian, and English means the participants feel "pride" and "power", and they believe it makes them "resourceful" and "knowledgeable". The regional factor makes a

difference in someone's identity, and it can also change over time depending on political or social changes.

When it comes to *preference,* each of the participant gives a different answer, which can mean that there are differences in their identity shift. Romina, for example, says she doesn't have a choice of what language she uses, mainly because of the people she has surrounded herself with. English is becoming her dominant language, and therefore her Moldovan identity is fighting to survive, and her Russian is definitely dying. Nina, because she has about the same number of people around her speaking each of the three languages, is indifferent. Nina might be the only individual who is trying to maintain each of her identities at the same time.

The final factor, in my opinion, is the most significant indicator of identify shift. The participants' attitudes towards each language affects how they behave, act, feel, and think when they switch languages. For example, Romina misses the way she used to be when she only knew Romanian and Russian. She feels biased towards each language and tries hard to keep them all. Romina does realize that one day she won't be able to claim that she is truly *Moldovan* because of how Americanized she has become. Nina loves her L1, which is Romanian. Russian reminds her of "Putin", who she sees as a dictator and manipulator, and therefore she projects the same feelings of dictatorship and manipulation onto the language. For Larisa, the only negative part of her knowing all three languages is her accent, and because of her Russian, she has been identified as Russian, and she does not like that much. She once tried to change her accent, but at one point in her life she realized that would never be enough, and she finally accepted it.

Limitations

As with any research, this study was constrained by limitations. First, we do not have the exact level of proficiency of each language of each participant. In this case study, we only relied

on their self-reported knowledge of the languages they spoke. It could be more relevant if we followed up with a study that tested language proficiency first, but in this study, we wanted to get the first "baseline" of data by observing what the respondents have reported. All the data was analyzed according to the perceptions each participant had of herself.

Another limitation would be the questions that were asked. The questions were based on the researcher's experience of knowing all three languages. There was still plenty of data to talk about, but if, for example, we want to perceive the exact differences of identity shift, we must test each language and have a lot more questions for the participants' friends and family members. I still found it interesting how different people become when switching languages; the switch does not determine who they are, but knowledge of it helps to understand them better and perhaps know what to do in order to help them to improve any language they lack proficiency in. One small failure of this study was the number of participants. Although the focused on each one of them was quite comprehensive, it would have been interesting to question twenty or more people by giving them surveys. But in that case, it would have taken a lot longer to process that amount of data.

Implications

To the participants, switching from one language to another in different situations is like switching channels on TV, but there clearly is more to it than that. It has been such an interesting journey to study the perception of identify shift in trilingual speakers. It makes one ponder how the knowledge humans possess determines who they are.

The primary differences that were found could help in second-language acquisition research, language teaching, or immigration-assimilation research. After all, learning is only another way of changing; when we learn something new, we change into something new. In our

case study, the participants struggled not only to learn a new language but also to keep their original identity. To the casual observer, this process might seem relatively painless, but it's not in the eyes of a learner. Do we really know how the learning process went, when in reality we only see results? As a researcher and trilingual myself, it meant a great deal to question others to see if they feel the same way I do. At times, I feel exhausted using English so much. Russian used to be my minor language, but after living in Russia for almost two years, the language changed me quite a bit. And then again, when I moved to another new country, that part of me, of my identity, was shifted because of something new. I was gratified to also see those differences in the identities of our participants.

I love the idea of keeping your accent, because this part of where you come from defines who you are. It is good to have that in mind instead of seeing an accent as an obstacle or an issue. Many learners get stuck in the mindset that their accent is a hindrance and therefore do not move forward with their goals. Somehow it makes them feel inferior and not able to perform their work as well as if they had no accent, when in most cases that is not true.

I really enjoyed learning from each participant how proud they are of knowing all the languages they do. It is not easy to maintain three languages, but somehow they do. I believe that the culture we come from helps us to maintain all three languages at about the same proficiency level. It is a part of who we are, and that part of our identity I think will stay with us forever. We are Moldovans, and we love the country we come from.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study can be taken to the next level of research, in which the participants could take an actual language-aptitude test for each language they know. This could provide more accurate data that could allow us find more precise differences in the perceived identity shift of each

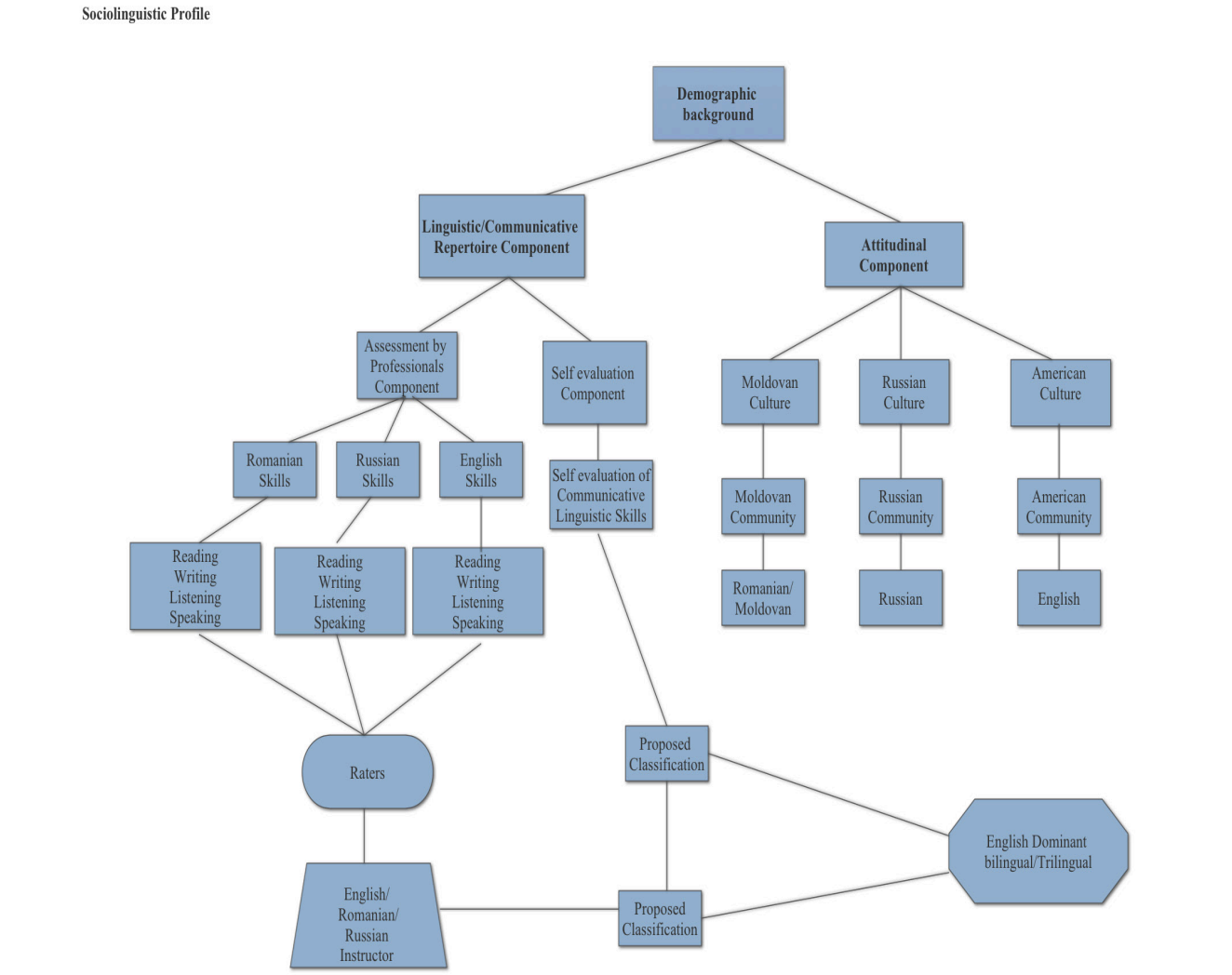
participant. This can also be taken to a level in which different feelings, as reported by the respondent, could be studied. For example, in other studies the focus was on “feeling logical, serious, emotional, fake and different” (Dewaele and Nakano, 2012, p. 112). This type of research could be done by making specific surveys in which the individual could report on their feelings according to their knowledge.

Further study can also focus on the relationships in the participant’s life: for example, interviewing family members, friends, or co-workers to find different perspectives that could confirm the data from the first subject. The main question should be, “What helps these people keep their identity, and why is it important to actually keep it?”

Since we know that a language is an identity marker, then another question would be, “Do three languages create three different types of identity for an individual?” Each language has its own culture, which means it is possible that these types of identity interfere with each other each day for this person. For our study, we wanted to find out the first baseline for this kind of knowledge.

The following is a sociolinguistic profile based on a research that was done for ASL and English as a second language. This was an attempt to give an idea of how influential the demographic background is in a research of language studying. If we were to evaluate all the components given in this graphic, then the results will aid in finding the dominant language that an individual has. The only way to find out is to conduct another research study.

Figure 4: Sociolinguistic profile



Conclusion

When researching *identity shift*, there were a few results to be found, which indicates that more research needs to be done. In order to see people, change their identity as they switch to a different language, perhaps it would be best to put them in a specific situation and then observe them. Perhaps only then there can be some results on actual behavior. But what was found in this case study is that the participants do become self-aware of how they feel if they have to switch to

a different language in order to accommodate someone. When their attitudes were discussed, they said they generally tried to accommodate based on how they thought the other side felt.

Moving to another country, one hopes not just for a better future but also to be able to speak freely if that was not the case before. The participants do show a bit of a love-hate relationship toward the Russian language, because at some point in their life they had to change from speaking Romanian to Russian in order to accommodate others. It is acceptable to have to do so occasionally, but when people have to do it daily, it does not seem a polite accommodation but an undesirable necessity. Each of the participants immigrated to the U.S. about ten years ago. Only one of them still regularly encounters that aspect of accommodation because of the people she has surrounded herself with. As for the other two participants, not so much; perhaps one of them has a lot less of a Russian and Romanian community in her life, but the other one, basically almost none.

This study contributes to the knowledge of different identities people have while switching languages daily. It is a unique way of learning of someone's struggle, and at the same time finding ways to help them.

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